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TWO PRIZE ESSAYS

ON

EDUCATIONAL UNIFICATION

IN THE

STATE OF NEW YORK

PUBLISHED FOR
THE UNIFICATION PRIZE COMMITTEE
PALMYRA, N. Y.

1899

To the authors of these two papers were awarded the prizes of \$100.00 each, offered in June, 1899, by unnamed persons, for the best essays by a woman and a man respectively upon the subject of unification of the educational system of the State of New York.

Copies may be obtained upon request from the Unification Prize Committee, Palmyra, N. Y.

FOR

EDUCATIONAL UNIFICATION

THE NEW YORK STATE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM
ITS HISTORY, ITS DEFECTS, AND THE REMEDY

A PRIZE PAPER

—BY—

SARA ELIZABETH STEWART

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Analysis

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The New York State Educational System: its History, its Defects, and the Remedy

The changes in the New York educational system proposed last winter in the "White educational bill" have aroused not only strong feeling among those directly affected, but also a general and widespread public interest. As reconstructive educational legislation in some form will probably be an important feature of the work of the next legislature, a study of present conditions is not ill-timed.

ANOMALY OF A DUAL SYSTEM

There are now in New York State two distinct and independent systems of public education, of radically different organization, occupying different fields, working in great part without reference to each other, and yet vitally connected—the University of the State of New York and the department of public instruction. "Taken together they form a system without theoretic unity and with great and for the most part unnecessary complexity."

New York alone of the 45 United States presents this anomaly of dual control for a single purpose, and its unique position seems to result from gradual growth rather than from premeditation. In 1784, within a year of the evacuation of New York by the British, the University of the State of New York was established by law and its regents empowered to hold estates to use for "the further promotion of learning and the extension of literature." In 1787 a committee of the regents recommended "permanent superintendence and public elementary schools through the State." In 1812 State supervision of the schools began when the office of State superintendent of common schools was created. The secretary of state performed the duties of this office from 1821 to 1854, when a separate department was created by the leg-

islature. Since then the department of public instruction has been independent of the board of regents, though the State superintendent is *ex officio* a regent.

The constitutional convention of 1894 discussed at length the duality of our educational system, but the committee on education announced itself unable to agree on any plan of unification, though it plainly recognized its desirability. The University of the State of New York, already the oldest institution of the State and the recipient of the *Grand prix* at the French exposition of 1889 as well as of a special award at the World's Fair in 1893, was, as a result of the 1894 convention, introduced into the constitution, and must therefore endure while our constitution remains unchanged.

As our educational system is now administered the department of public instruction has supervision over all agencies for the training of public school teachers and the distribution of most of the common school fund, while the State superintendent himself exercises almost despotic judicial powers and acts as final arbiter in all disputes concerning school matters. The University of the State of New York, in addition to its organized supervision of public libraries, museums, and home education in the State, has powers of inspection and examination in high schools and academies and has at its disposition moneys derived from the United States deposit fund and the literature fund, supplemented by \$60,000 from the general fund, to be distributed among its academies and high schools.

DUPLICATION OF LABOR AND EXPENSE

The Empire State, spending on education almost \$6,000,000 more than any other State, with its great universities at Ithaca and New York, its famous colleges whose alumni rolls shine with illustrious names, its 541 high schools generally admitted to show better average scholarship than those of any other State, has no reason to be ashamed of its educational advantages; yet its citizens may do well to ask if there is no room for improvement. And first the careful tax-payer, burdened by municipal or town taxation, by general State and by school taxes, seeing on every hand lavish expenditure of public funds, the army of office-holders, the extravagant management of public affairs, this same

tax-payer who has demanded and brought about unity in management of public charities, of asylums, of prisons, may object to our present dual educational system on the ground of lack of economy. Undoubtedly there is duplication of labor and consequent expense. The superintendent of public instruction for executive control of our public schools receives a salary from the State of \$5,000. Meanwhile the board of regents (serving as is well known without salary themselves) pay their secretary for executive duties connected with public libraries and schools \$7,000. Each organization has its separate staff of inspectors, examiners, assistants, deputies, clerks, and office boys. Each has its separate list of inspectors' traveling expenses, separate lists of expenses for preparing, printing, transmitting, conducting, and correcting examinations. Each must prepare and submit to the legislature an annual report, compiling therefor independent lists of statistics, demanding separate reports from each school in the State and requiring to be printed, each a large volume in itself, at State expense. Two independent offices are also supported, each having its full complement of clerks, stenographers, and typewriters, one on the first floor, the other on the fourth floor of our State capitol, but both devoted to superintending and controlling our State educational system.

For the use of the department of public instruction \$33,000 is appropriated annually "for instruction—by means of pictorial representation." The lantern slides used for this purpose are prepared with the greatest care, special agents even being sent abroad to secure original and accurate pictures. As the result these slides are pronounced by experts to be the best made. Yet not one of them is available to the University even by purchase! The regents accordingly buy others from their appropriation, and thus the State finds itself possessed of two separate collections of lantern slides, the one controlled by the department and unavailable to the regents, the other controlled by the regents and unavailable to the department, both collections being originally intended to serve the same end.

DUPLICATION OF INSPECTION AND REPORTS

Nor is this duplication of labor and expense in administration, with its consequent drain on the taxpayer's pocket, the only waste

resulting from the dual system of control. Every public school in the State in which instruction above elementary branches is given suffers from duplication of labor. One day a regents inspector visits the school and investigates the building, the laboratory supplies, the teaching equipment and force. Within a week, perhaps, the inspector from the department of public instruction appears, requiring the same information and demanding the same amount of time and attention from the school officers. Inspection is without doubt beneficial, but let there be moderation even in inspection.

At the close of the school year, detailed reports must be submitted by each school, one to the University of the State of New York; the other, quite different, to the department of public instruction. No one who knows the time and labor involved in preparing with anything approaching accuracy even the simplest of these school reports, who has seen the school officer overwhelmed with the rush of necessary work at the close of the year, struggling to secure the data demanded by one department, and, that accomplished, to present the same facts under different heads to suit the demands of the other department, no one who appreciates the importance of economy in expense, in time, in energy, can fail to regret the necessity for such duplication.

It may be urged, however, that much of this and similar wastes, as seen in our schools, could be avoided by harmony in State control. But such harmony is singularly and of necessity lacking in our system of dual supervision. A perfect educational system demands organic unity. This we lack.

Every high school teacher in the State will testify to the virtual impossibility of arranging the curriculum to satisfy the requirements of the department of public instruction and also offer the combination of studies required for the various regents certificates. The high school faculty, striving to plan its course to meet college requirements, local tastes, and also the clashing demands of a double-headed State management, comes to deplore bitterly this lack of unity.

DUPLICATION OF EXAMINATIONS

But perhaps the greatest evil resulting from lack of co-operation is found in the multiplication of examinations, in no case an

unmixed blessing. A boy enters the high school passing preliminary examinations in all the elementary branches. For each subject he receives his regents passcard. After a year or two he finds it necessary to add to his funds before going on with his studies. He applies for a position in a district school, but can not be employed as a public school teacher till he has passed "the uniform examinations" in exactly the same elementary branches as those covered by the regents passcards he has already earned, requiring no more extended or varied knowledge, but conducted by a different department.

Or the not uncommon instance presents itself of an ambitious lad, now a country school teacher, but with aspirations toward a profession, perhaps law or medicine or dentistry. He has already passed examinations in arithmetic, geography, English, and the other branches required for a State teachers certificate. Every spare moment is now almost inexpressibly precious to him, but in addition to imparting instruction in all the branches demanded—and in these ungraded country schools 20 different classes a day are no rare thing—to helping on the farm, doing errands, picking up odd jobs wherever he can, and studying for his selected profession, he must find time to "brush up" and again take examinations in each preliminary subject, this time conducted by the regents. For, the two departments being mutually exclusive, none of the credentials obtained from the department of public instruction for purposes of teaching are accepted by the University of the State of New York, which has entire control of professional requirements. In whatever direction our students turn, whatever field of employment or advanced instruction they seek, examinations seem to multiply, and instead of disposing of any one subject once for all, the tendency is to examine and re-examine, each State department calmly ignoring all credentials issued by the other, while the student, his teachers, his friends, and his family suffer from the results.

DUPLICATION OF DEGREES

The degree B.A., which may not be granted by any institution under University supervision that fails to reach the required standard, can be secured in the New York city normal college, which is controlled by the department of public instruction, though the

entrance requirements are there distinctly lower than those of other colleges of the State. This college, on the other hand, refuses to accept regents credentials for entrance requirements, though they are recognized by leading colleges in this State and elsewhere. Here, then, we have the edifying spectacle of an institution under one of the State educational departments ignoring the credentials issued by the other, and that in turn despising this institution's degree.

DUPLICATION OF MATERIAL

Still another example of the lack of co-operative effort is found in connection with the regents system of travelling libraries, by which books, pictures and lantern slides are lent to schools in the University. As the common schools are not legally entitled to these loans, the important work of guiding the reading and developing the artistic tastes of the pupils must be postponed till they enter the high school, though to obtain the best results it is generally recognized that the training should begin in the lowest grades. Important, therefore as are these efforts on the part of the regents to cultivate an abiding taste for good reading and for true art, they are seriously handicapped by the lack of harmony in general administration that brings the pupils to the high school unprepared for some of the instruction that will be most far-reaching in its effects.

There is scarcely a teacher of the State who cannot produce definite illustrations of the disadvantage to teachers and pupils of this lack of harmony in educational control, and that its evil effects are no more in evidence is due to the practical common sense of those who work under the system rather than to the system itself.

POLITICAL CONTROL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC

INSTRUCTION

But even if the present dual system were so administered, with perfect sympathy and intelligent co-operation, as to present ideal conditions of economy and harmony, still one flaw would be found in our present educational machine. Freedom from party politics is so generally recognized as an essential of a good educational system that it would be difficult to find any one openly ad-

vocating the surrender of our public schools to the vicissitudes of partisan control. Here if in any department of the public service should be placed men of special training and experience; yet at this vital point the people of New York for nearly forty-six years have submitted to a system which if not controlled is strongly influenced by partisan considerations. The superintendent of public instruction and his deputies enjoy the reward of faithful service to their party, and in their turn discreetly dispense favor to local aspirants. Although it may be true that political appointments are in some cases as good as those made in an honest effort to select for merit only, still this is the lucky chance, not the necessary result of a well considered policy. Some of our superintendents have undoubtedly been educational leaders whose records command the respect and admiration of all; but others have been not only inferior in educational experience and attainments, but in some cases actually lacking in the sterling qualities which are demanded in leaders of the youth. And even if, for forty-six years, we had models selected by party leaders for this important position, what right have we to hope for similar immunity from disaster in the future? Educational interests are growing yearly; more and more money passes through the hands of the administrative officers; how long will it be before even the pretence is abandoned of appointing for fitness or experience?

It is maintained that the direct appointment of the superintendent by the legislature or governor is desirable as bringing him more closely in touch with the people and their needs. This might be true in a Utopian republic, where the will of a right-minded people was reflected as in a mirror in its legislative halls. But under present conditions the will of the people is less authoritative than the gesture of a political boss.

REMEDIES SUGGESTED

If no other method were possible we should be justified in submitting to existing conditions; but if a plan can be found that will retain the present advantages and avoid the dangers, it clearly should be adopted. Unification in some form has long been discussed, and now that the consent both of the University and of the department of public instruction has apparently been secured, it remains only to decide how this can be effected best.

Of the plans suggested, three are worthy of consideration:

1. Unification under a superintendent appointed directly by the legislature or governor.
2. Unification under a new board of regents elected one from each judicial district, with the governor an *ex officio* member.
3. Unification under the present board of regents.

AN APPOINTED SUPERINTENDENT

The first plan would throw into politics the entire State system of education with its large revenues, making it a tempting field for spoilsmen of both parties. If it is granted that freedom from party politics is a requisite of a good educational system, this plan must be abandoned at the start.

ELECTION BY A SMALLER ELECTIVE BOARD OF REGENTS

The plan of placing the schools under the supervision of a smaller elective board seems at first glance to be a desirable solution of the problem. The eight elective members and the governor make a good working number, and neither one of the existing organizations is absorbed by the other. But on more careful consideration, the danger of political manipulation again presents itself. Nominations and elections do not always put the best men in power, and in this case, the members being elected one from each judicial district, the tendency would be to make the office of regent a consolatory offering to disappointed aspirants for public honors, or, worse, vantage ground for public representatives of local political bosses, in either case detrimental to the character and usefulness of the board of regents. If the election should be for a term of years instead of for life, as in the case of the present regents, the advantage, if any, of more direct dependence upon the people would not only be more than offset by frequent changes and less interest on the part of retiring officers, but our educational system would lose the benefit of the wholesome protection against even attempted political domination which their life tenure now gives to the regents of the university. They are but human, like others who shall succeed them, and to the permanent tenure of their office, more than to else, may be ascribed the origin and unbroken continuance of their most honoring, distinguishing and important characteristic, their

absolute freedom from partisan political control. They now have no need to consider what might be the effect upon their prospects for re-election, if their conscientious action should not accord with the selfish purposes of some temporary political magnate.

ELECTION BY THE PRESENT BOARD OF REGENTS

But even with the second proposed plan working at its best, why should the voters be burdened with the selection of a new board when there is already in existence one that from the earliest history of the State has been identified with its educational affairs, has established and fostered the oldest institutions of learning in the commonwealth, and during the first half of the present century took the initial steps leading to the formation of the department of public instruction? Since during a heated discussion lasting several months no convincing reason for making such a change was advanced, we are justified in considering the third plan, which proposed to entrust the educational interests of the State to the present board of regents.

In examining the character and record of this board, we find a body of men identified prominently with public movements both in their own sections and throughout the State. Each one is a man of affairs, distinguished in his vocation and bringing to his office experience of practical benefit in the deliberations claiming his attention. As a body they have the advantage of a history reaching back 115 years, and characterized by continual development and progress. Within the last ten years their efforts for the welfare of the schools and the safeguarding of professional interests have attracted the attention of educators the world over, and many of the ideas and methods originating in the University of the State of New York have been copied by other States in whole or in part.

In a recent rigid investigation of the financial record of the University, not only was nothing found to be censured, but the committee devoted a portion of its report to praise of the economy of the administration. Moreover, appointments in the regents office are made strictly on civil service rules, party influence having no weight either in selecting or in retaining members of the staff. This insures a high grade of service, and as positions are

held as long as the work is satisfactory, there is every inducement to faithful fulfilment of the duties assigned.

A study also of the elaborate examination, inspection, travelling libraries and other systems shows unusual comprehension of the great importance of co-operation in every part of the work. Detail is reduced to the minimum, and duplication of labor is avoided whenever possible, so that in providing for the multitudinous needs of the 1305 institutions of the university the ground is covered but once and with the least expenditure of effort.

The closer the study of the work of the regents, the more strongly must one be impressed with the dignity of the organization, the wisdom of their deliberations, and the ability of their administration. With such a body already serving the State in this very field, prudence and common sense point unquestioningly toward making them the custodians of our entire system of education.

New York State is progressive and energetic. It is surely a question of time alone when this desirable change will be brought about; when by unification under a body of able, disinterested, devoted men, constituting a traditionally non-partisan board, we shall see our educational system administered with greater economy, with unity and harmony in all its parts, from the public kindergarten of our cities to the greatest university in the land, and on a plane as far above party politics as are our great scholars above "ward-heelers." Then even more than now may New York claim an educational system excelled by none.

UNIFICATION
OF
THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

A PRIZE PAPER

—BY—

RICHARD EDWIN DAY, LITT.D.

Analysis

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Unification of the School System

Education had gained a vigorous start in some of the American colonies before the Revolution. But like other social institutions in America it lacked the impulse that comes from organization and direction. When the declaration of peace allowed Americans to turn their thoughts to mental cultivation, the citizens of New York State began to erect a system of education. A large ambition possessed them; they would build a university as wide as the commonwealth. Their purpose was somewhat vague, and the legislation in which it was embodied was the fruit of a compromise in which religion, secularism, aristocracy, and democracy were blended and balanced; yet by virtue of these facts the educational institutions of New York have attained their rich and varied character. Eleven years after establishing the University of the State of New York, the Fathers, with foreseeing wisdom, began to lay a foundation for popular education. At first they were satisfied to make temporary provision by limited appropriations and lottery donations for their great object; but in 1805 they instituted a permanent fund for the support of common schools.

DUAL EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

For nearly a century two official organizations, one devoted to advanced and one to elementary learning, have developed side by side in this State, but not always harmoniously or equally. The relations of the two departments, occupying the same geographical field, each with extensive responsibilities, could not be free at all times from antagonism; nor could their provinces be kept entirely distinct. The history of legislation and constitutional conventions in this State for a third of a century testifies to the conflicts within the dual system and to the desires of educators and statesmen to effect a consolidation. An instance was

afforded in the constitutional convention of 1867-8. The committee on education reported an article one section of which contemplated the creation of a board of seven persons to have "general supervision of all the institutions of learning in this State." The section was eviscerated by the adoption of an amendment offered by Judge Comstock, restricting the supervision of the proposed board to the common schools; and on final vote it was rejected. George William Curtis vainly advocated in the convention the creation of a board of education to have "general supervision of the common schools, and such care of all other institutions of learning which receive aid from the State, or which now are or hereafter may be subject to State visitations, as the law may prescribe." Such was the fate of one attempt to unify the educational system by depriving the regents of their authority. In the legislature there were similar attempts. The session of 1870 and that of 1874 witnessed the introduction and the peaceful death of bills designed to abolish the board of regents. An effort at unification more moderate and more nearly successful was the Flagg bill of 1870, which proposed that a department of education, with a State superintendent, be established in place of the existing department of public instruction and the existing superintendent, and required that the regents annually report to the new superintendent. The regents' supervision was to be extended to the normal schools. This bill reached the governor, the last day of the session, but did not receive his signature. The legislature of 1874 saw the introduction of a measure more nearly consonant with the best public opinion, which passed the senate 21 votes to 4, but failed in the assembly at the termination of the session. The intention of this measure was to reorganize the board of regents, but vest them with the powers of the superintendent of public instruction, and empower them to appoint and remove that officer. The administrative and supervisory powers of the regents office were not to be impaired.

THE BEST BASIS OF UNIFICATION

If a review of this period exhibits a persistent tendency to unite the two departments, a longer retrospect impresses the historical student with the desirability of extending the authority of the University of the State of New York as a basis of unification.

The entire history of this institution attests its devotion to popular education and its fitness to administer so vast a charge as the public school system. A report of the regents issued Feb. 15, 1787, contains these words: "The erecting public schools for teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic is an object of very great importance, which ought not to be left to the discretion of private men, but be promoted by public authority. Of so much knowledge no citizen ought to be destitute, and yet it is a reflection as true as it is painful, that but too many of our youth are brought up in utter ignorance." The University gave an energetic impulse to the institution of a system of elementary education. The law of 1795, by which an appropriation was made for the encouragement of common schools, was due in no slight degree to the repeated exhortations of the regents. To the legislature of 1793 they addressed these words: "We cannot help suggesting to the legislature the numerous advantages which we conceive would accrue to the citizens in general from the institution of schools in various parts of the State, for the purpose of instructing our children in the lower branches of education; such as reading their native language with propriety, and so much of writing and arithmetic as to enable them, when they come forward in active life, to transact, with accuracy and dispatch, the business arising from their daily intercourse with each other. The mode of accomplishing this desirable object we respectfully submit to the wisdom of the legislature. The attention which the legislature has evinced to promote literature by the liberal provision heretofore made, encourages, with all deference, to suggest the propriety of rendering it permanent by setting apart for that salutary purpose some of the unappropriated lands." The following year the appeal was urgently renewed; and again the year after, with satisfactory results. The attitude of the regents toward elementary instruction has been consistently helpful, while their direct influence on public schools by means of examinations has been steady and potent. Within a few years their service in the cause of popular education has given birth to such beneficent activities as university extension and assistance to home reading. At the same time the facilities of the State library, under the care of the University, have been applied with increas-

ing liberality and inventiveness to the promotion of popular intelligence.

RECORD OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE REGENTS

In the field which has been the particular province of the regents office, its influence has been conspicuously fruitful. Under its direction high schools, academies, and professional schools have multiplied and flourished. The colleges which it has chartered are in many cases eminent, and in all cases respectable; the schools of secondary education are among the best; its training schools for the professions show the benefits of worthy standards jealously guarded; while the degrees it bestows as well as those whose bestowment it authorizes are everywhere honored. Private schools have found their rights secure under its guardianship; and religious schools have suffered no invasion of their privileges. Who can doubt that primary education in the Empire State would be benefited if the common schools could be reached by the administrative energy and uniform supervision by which secondary and professional education have profited?

Any one who has observed the influence of party politics on departments of government, and deplored the perversion of public trusts to partisan advantage must perceive in the freedom of the regents from political dictation an eminent qualification for the management of the consolidated school interests of the State. Though elected by the political parties, these officers have found in the life tenure, in the gratuitous nature of their services, in their distribution among the different professions, a sufficient defense against the persuasions of partisanship.

REGENTS IN TOUCH WITH THE PEOPLE

I cannot regard as worthy of prolonged examination the assertion, occasionally met, that the regents are too removed from the people to be suitable guardians of popular education. Who are the regents? They are men in the various professions, but a number are journalists. Whatever consideration has often suggested to the legislature the wisdom of electing an editor to the board of regents, the frequent choice of a newspaper man has promoted closeness of relations between the regents and the people. Of all professions journalism touches society at the

largest number of points, and journalists are most fitted by training and experience to give expression to popular ideas.

If the State were seeking to construct an ideal system to administer its educational interests, could it do better than to lodge the authority in a board of educated men, chosen by the people's representatives, drawn from all parties and denominations, as well as all professions, pledged by reputation and standing to a faithful discharge of duty, and shielded by the life tenure and the gratuitous character of their services against political influence and the pressure of class or section ?

STAND BY THE SYSTEM OF OUR FATHERS

The University of the State of New York was founded in the formative period of the nation, struck out by the same shaping genius that produced the federal constitution. That political instrument was not a "paper constitution", for it embodied the political experience of English-speaking men. The act creating the University of the State of New York was not a paper scheme of education, for it drew its suggestion from the ancient universities of England, adapting the idea to American conditions. As the federal constitution has expanded and changed in obedience to events, so the educational system of New York has adjusted itself to circumstances, proving its flexibility and vitality. The possibilities of national growth under the federal constitution appear immeasurable. And it is difficult to assign limits to the development which the educational institutions of this State may attain under the system planned and established by the Fathers.

Memorandum

In the summer of this year some unnamed friends of educational progress offered two prizes of \$100.00 each for the best articles by a man and a woman, respectively, upon the subject of the unification of the educational system of this State. The prizes were awarded for the accompanying papers.

The winner of the man's prize, Mr. Richard Edwin Day, is a scholar of fine culture and varied literary experience, and as a former teacher and writer upon educational topics is well acquainted with our educational system.

He was born April 27, 1852, in Oswego County, in this State; prepared for college at Falley Seminary, at Fulton; took his collegiate course at Syracuse University, graduating in 1877, and earned there his master's degree upon examination in the following year. That institution further honored him during the past summer with the degree of Doctor of Literature.

In 1879-1880, Mr. Day was assistant editor of the Northern Christian Advocate, and during the succeeding 18 years was an editorial writer and literary critic upon the staff of the Syracuse Standard. He now resides in Albany and is an examiner in the Regents' office.

The modesty of the writer of the woman's prize paper, Miss Sara Elizabeth Stewart, further than her admirable paper itself speaks, leaves us without other disclosed knowledge of her than that she has been a public school teacher in this State, and is now teaching in Washington, D. C.

The School Bulletin

The School Bulletin

A MONTHLY JOURNAL FOR TEACHERS
SUBSCRIPTION, ONE DOLLAR A YEAR
SINGLE COPIES TEN CENTS

C. W. BARDEEN, Editor and Proprietor
SYRACUSE, N. Y.

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SYRACUSE, N. Y., DECEMBER, 1899

The Educational Commission

As reported in another column, the Educational Unification Commission held their first meeting at Albany on November 27th. Even the meagre reports given in the news papers of the proceedings disclose their importance and foreshadow the action of the commission, which undoubtedly will recommend unification of our entire State educational system under the supervision of the Regents of the University, as the Bulletin has long advocated and upon which the speakers before the commission were substantially agreed.

THE CHANCELLOR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

As a step in the desirable working out of such unification, Superintendent Maxwell, of New York, made the important suggestion, which was received with marked general approval and which we believe the commission will adopt, that the Chancellor of the University of the State, to be chosen by the regents, should be the chief executive officer in the unified educational system, with competent lieutenants at the head of the departments or bureaus into which the work would naturally be subdivided. The office of chancellor would then be the highest educational station in the land. It is a great thought, and we believe will receive immediate and cordial support from all educators.

The inquiries made by the commission disclosed that there had been renewed to them some of the various suggestions of previous times for reorganization of the board of regents, but none of them, we hope, will receive the sanction of the commission.

CONTINUED LIFE TENURE FOR REGENTS

As we have on other occasions indicated, we are opposed to any present material alteration of the constitution of the regents.

The most mischievous suggestion, occasionally repeated, is that of changing their tenure of office from that of life to a fixed number of years. The prize paper of Miss Stewart, published in the present number of the Bulletin and to which we have elsewhere adverted, effectively deals with that question. She rightly ascribes the most accrediting feature of the regents of the University—their always maintained non-partisan character—to their tenure of office. Miss Stewart well illustrates and justifies her thought by saying:

"If the election should be for a term of years instead of for life, * * * our educational system would lose the benefit of the wholesome protection against even attempted political domination which their life tenure now gives to the regents of the university. They are but human, like others who shall succeed them, and to the permanent tenure of their office, more than to else, may be ascribed the origin and unbroken continuance of their most honoring, distinguishing and important characteristic, their absolute freedom from partisan political control. They now have no need to consider what might be the effect upon their prospects for re-election, if their conscientious action should not accord with the selfish purposes of some temporary political magnate."

To that may be added the amplification that their life tenure not only makes it easy for them to maintain independence in official action, but such unassailable independence effectively discourages efforts unworthily to influence them.

No better evidence of this fact need be sought than the voluntary statement of Superintendent Skinner, in his speech at the State Teachers association at Utica (quoted in our August number), that he had "*seen superintendents stand up and resist political pressure, which never yet appeared at the door of the regents of the university.*"

Cumulative and perhaps equally striking evidence was given by the same witness in the same Utica speech, when, after saying "*Everybody who understands our school system will agree that politics should not control our schools,*" and remarking that the superintendent and the regents are elected by "the same power"—the legislature—he further said, "*Where is the difference? Merely in the length of term.*" * * * Are there no politicians among the regents? Call the roll. Have they lost their politics since their election? *It is true they are elected for life and have no anxiety concerning a re-election.*"

But when all due weight has been given to the foregoing considerations, which so strongly make in favor of the regents' life tenure, there is a further and not less important advantage that proceeds therefrom. To an extent unnoticed perhaps, political managers consciously or otherwise are

largely influenced in selecting their candidates for the office of regent of the university by the fact that owing to the life tenure of the office its incumbents when once elected are beyond partisan control. The obvious hopelessness of being able thus to control regents, destroys the otherwise business interest with which practical minded political chiefs would regard the office, and vastly increases the possibility of having men selected for the office of regent chiefly because of high character, natural independence, and general fitness for the discharge of its important public duties. Thus the life tenure of the regents has undoubtedly been primarily potent in bringing into the membership of their board the eminent men who during the past century have graced that high station. By all means should it be continued, to operate with like effect.

AGE LIMIT UNNECESSARY

As to retirement on account of age, to terminate their period of usefulness by an arbitrary age limit, as has been proposed, would be not only unwise but ungracious. Some would turn them out at the age of 70. It is not at all clear that such enforced retirement works well in the case of our judges. Observation indicates that thus, far more often than otherwise, the public is deprived of the continued services of an experienced and enlightened judge in the ripened prime of his greatest usefulness. But however that may be, there is no analogy between the two services. Of the well paid judge it is expected that he will give all of his time to daily recurring duties whose adequate discharge requires ample and enduring vigor of both mind and body; while the functions of the wholly uncompensated regents,—chiefly deliberative and legislative in formulating policies, responsible and discretionary in selecting capable and efficient subordinates for executive work,—naturally and reasonably do not contemplate or exact active personal service except at infrequent intervals and usually of brief continuance. The exhausting labors for which age would unfit are not required of them. In their chief sphere of usefulness, the seasoned wisdom of mature years is of the highest value. And it would be a serious loss to the public if the board of regents should be deprived of the instruction of their elder brothers in debate or of the steadying of the latter's conservative votes, at any time before total infirmity shall overcome them. And it further should be remembered that more often it is only in the later years of life, when ordinary pressing activities have been laid aside, that opportunity and willingness coincide to permit in any large degree general devotion of one's powers to gratuitous service of others. And if, after years of such service, there shall linger now and then one to whom little

remains but years and honors, shall any of the latter be taken from him that he will not voluntarily lay down? If while time and strength were his he has gladly given of them to unrewarded public service, he has loved his work and will have grown, more and more as other earthly ties weaken, to cherish the associations of membership in the board of regents. If he so wishes, let that enjoyment and all possible official activity continue until he goes to his grave. Shall the public in whose behalf he has done a labor of love, give him less of gratitude than to let him die in the harness?

His continued keep will cost nothing; nor will there be other need of haste in replacing him, however great his weakness, for among the nineteen elective regents there are always, under all circumstances, a sufficient number with retained powers equal to all demands. And here is reason for not lessening the number of regents. The present organization has room within itself for a retired list of regents *emeriti*—who, from time to time, will be translated, but need not be removed. Existing conditions bring their successors soon enough, and fast enough for seasoning in and assimilation by the board.

OTHER PROPOSED CHANGES UNDESIRABLE

It is of course that inventive minds have suggested various other changes in the constitution of the board of regents, such as differing methods for their election or appointment, discontinuing *ex officio* members, etc., etc. But change is not necessarily improvement, and it is conceded even by their advocates that most of the proposed changes are not of great importance. For that reason alone, they should not be made. The actual consequences of any change cannot easily be apprehended. All the elements of the constitution of the regents of the university have worked together harmoniously for a hundred years to develop their organized desirable qualities, and there should be no needless legislative experimenting now upon the constitution of that body. Emphatically, let well enough alone.

We earnestly hope that our views are in accord with those of the Unification Commission. Certainly the thoughts outlined have and increasingly will have the support of experienced educators and intelligent professional men generally.

MEDICAL PROFESSION INTERESTED

The medical profession especially will be unwilling to have changes made in the constitution or tenure of office of the board of regents which in perhaps unforeseen ways might lessen the independence and reliable impartiality with which that body has administered the system of medical examinations that has done so much to elevate the standard and character of that profession,—with marked benefit to both its members and the public.

Legislate to bring the whole educational system of the State under the regents' devoted and responsible control, changing only so far as necessary existing provisions of

law, and leaving as much as possible matters of detail to their careful enlightened discretion. Make as has been proposed the Chancellor the supreme executive head, endowing his office with such powers and a compensation so emancipating from temporal concern as to invite to its duties the greatest of men. Under such leadership, sustained and guided by the cooperating, composite wisdom of the independent board of regents, we assuredly shall develop and perfect a system of public education of surpassing excellence.

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

All who have convictions upon the foregoing matters should make their views known without delay to the Educational Unification Commission and to the governor and members of the legislature. Sincere friends of educational progress should now cheerfully give time and personal efforts and incur legitimate expenses in aid of the accomplishment of the great educational reform so promisingly in sight. The newspapers of the State will seldom have a cause so worthy of their active, continued and potent support.

Since the foregoing was written and just as we go to press the daily papers are publishing an outline of a plan for unification purporting to have been given out by the Educational Unification Commission for public consideration during the interval before their next meeting on December 14.

While we are much gratified that they propose to accomplish unification substantially as we have urged—under the regents of the university, with their chancellor for chief educational executive—we regret that the commission should have given encouragement, even tentatively, to needless and harmful proposed changes in the constitution of the board of regents, and an illogical classification of public schools.

Nothing can be gained by the suggested dropping of *ex officio* members, and something may be lost. Their presence in the board is never detrimental, but often useful in promoting a better understanding with an existing official administration of the State government. They also help to keep the board in closer touch with prevailing public sentiment.

As before indicated, we do not approve of making the age of 70 an arbitrary limit to a regent's active usefulness, as the commissioners propose. And it is quite needless and illogical to favor lessening the size of the board of regents, and to approach such reduction by the present appointment at one swoop of nine new members! The sudden injection into the board of so many inexperienced persons cannot be judicious, and, whatever the motive, it clearly is an unwise example to set for the incitement of future legislatures which for unworthy purposes may wish to change suddenly the character and control

of the State's supervising educational board. Danger lurks in such precedents.

Appointment by the governor and confirmation by the senate, as the commission seems to contemplate for its future, may not be a bad way to make regents; but why change from the present method of election by the whole legislature—with the same honoring dignity as that of the choice of a United States senator? It has worked well for over a century.

If some of the foregoing matters may be regarded as of minor importance, the commissioners certainly have been led into a very serious mistake in their reported recommendation of one special sub-department, to be called the "department of public education—to have charge of all tax-supported schools, including high schools."

In that, they have surprisingly ignored the contrary expressed judgment of the eminent educational experts who appeared before them. Dr. Milne, with whom the others, and especially Sup't Maxwell, were in complete accord, firmly opposed the grouping together of schools because of their being supported by public money—saying, pertinently, that their classification should depend upon the kind of work done; not upon the way the work was paid for. He also made it clear that the supervision of secondary and elementary schools should be kept separate, as it hitherto has been, because the nature, methods and aims of the distinguishing work of the two classes of schools so differed as to require for their most helpful guidance quite different qualities, preliminary training and acquirements, in the desirable directors of the two systems. All this is quite obvious to experienced educators, and the commissioners should be guided by their expert judgments in such matters. And it may be added that either field of labor in this State, the directing of elementary or of secondary education, is work enough for one department and responsibility enough for one director. To put upon any one man the care coincidently of the two classes of schools, means greater or less unavoidable neglect, or failure fully to apprehend the needs, of one class or the other, if not of both.

To get such, in many ways unrelated schools, under one domination, is the old unquenchable anxiety of the present department of public instruction, and against this our best teachers have again and again protested. Now is the time for them to be heard once more, from one end of the State to the other, and so explicitly that the mistaken thought will be rejected by the commissioners at their next meeting upon December 14. Teachers of all grades, and especially those of secondary schools, should speak out vigorously and promptly and let the commission have the benefit of their enlightened views upon these important questions.

A final word to the commissioners.

It is earnestly hoped the commission will

realize the danger of failure to their desires if they try to do too much. There is and will be a substantial unanimity of sentiment throughout the State in favor of educational unification under the regents of the university with their chancellor for chief executive. This constantly strengthening sentiment will receive legislative recognition and acquiescence. But to attempt at this time more than that, whether well conceived or not, or to endeavor to crystallize into statutory law many details, will arouse at each step opposition and multiply centres of contention whose dividing activities may wreck the whole plan. This is what the enemies of unification desire and one of the ways in which they will seek to accomplish their obstructive purpose.

We repeat, in substance, legislate for the suggested unification, pure and simple, and leave to be worked out by the ordinances of the regents the consequent details. With more time for deliberation, with greater expert knowledge and fuller understanding of the needs of the service, the regents, better and more wisely than the commission or any legislative committee, can gradually, and not with dislocating suddenness, arrange, and rearrange from time to time as changing circumstances shall require, the desirable sub-division of their supervisory work and assign it to such suitable executive departments as their mature reflection shall lead them to organize. If the regents are to be trusted at all, give them freedom for such responsible action as shall make possible their highest usefulness to our educational system.

Meeting of the Educational Commission

The first public meeting of the educational commission was held in Albany on the afternoon of Nov. 27. Invitations to appear before the commission had been sent out to the following six men: President Taylor of Vassar college, Sup't Maxwell of New York city, President Milne of the Albany normal college, Principal Boynton of the Ithaca high school, Principal Goodrich of the Utica high school, and Mr. Bardeen, the editor of the School Bulletin. The commission met at two o'clock in the room of the ways and means committee. Mr. Holls was elected chairman, and Judge Daly secretary. All the members were present except Mr. McMillan, who is temporarily in Colorado, but who hopes to be present at the next meeting of the commission.

Mr. Holls stated that the purpose of the commission was to confine itself to the question of unification, and that the speakers would be asked to limit themselves to that phase of the educational question.

Dr. Milne was first called upon. He said: The sentiment for unification is practically unanimous. The present system leads to duplication of examinations, of inspection, of expense. One trouble with the unifica-

tion bill of last winter was that it was framed and modified in the interest of persons in place who wanted to keep in place. The new law should be framed with reference to principles—not to men now in office.

He would propose a new officer, to be called commissioner of education, to be elected by the regents, and to be vested with the executive powers now conferred on the regents and on the State superintendent.

It might be necessary to change the constitution of the board of regents. He was not clear as to that. Perhaps a board elected by judicial districts, perhaps one appointed by the governor. Personally his own dealing had always been with boards elected for life, and he was favorable to that. He had seen a good deal of the present board of regents and did not see how a better board could be got together.

This commissioner should appoint heads of departments—a bureau of elementary education, another of secondary and higher education, another of home education. He would most assuredly keep separate the control of secondary from that of elementary education. In his experience he had found that secondary teaching required a class of teachers entirely different from those fitted to do elementary work. The work was on a different plane, was based on different principles, looked to different ideals, and should be under separate control.

In answer to the question of Mr. Holls whether he would classify schools according to whether or not they were supported by public money, he replied emphatically not. It was the kind of work that made the distinction, not how it was paid for.

There is an especial reason why this classification should not be made. A large portion of what are now academies are church schools. It would be a misfortune to separate these from the public high schools. It is desirable that the pupils growing up in the church schools should be kept in touch as much as possible with those in the public schools.

Sup't Maxwell of New York was next called upon. He said his attention was first directed to the necessity of unification after the passage of Chapter 1031, establishing definite requirements for the position of teacher in the primary and elementary schools of cities and villages. One of these requirements calls for graduation from a high school or academy, the course of which is approved by the State superintendent. This made necessary the establishment of a department of high school inspection in the department of public instruction, which led to dual inspection and other complications in secondary schools.

He agreed with Dr. Milne that the need was manifest for unification, and as to the necessity of keeping separate the supervision of elementary from that of secondary education. He thought Dr. Milne's general proposal was desirable; but instead of creating a new officer, to be called a commissioner

of education, he thought it would be in every way better to confer the powers of that office upon an office already existing and bearing a most desirable relation to the existing systems, namely, that of chancellor of the university. That office, vested with these powers, and given the tenure and salary of judges of the court of appeals, would be the most desirable educational position in the United States, and would command the services of any educator, however eminent. Its establishment would elevate and dignify the entire teaching profession.

In answer to the question of Mr. Holls, Dr. Maxwell said his experience with boards of education tended to favor long terms of office. He had always felt that when he had a good man upon a board of education he wanted to keep him there. He would not approve of an age limit for the board of regents. Many men would be more efficient in that position after seventy years than before.

Dr. Milne was recalled to answer this same question, and answered it in like manner.

Principal Boynton of the Ithaca high school followed, agreeing with the previous speakers as to the desirability of unification, and that it should be brought about by transferring control over the department of public instruction to the regents. He thoroughly approved of making the chancellor of the university the chief executive officer, and he would keep separate the supervision of elementary from that of secondary education, with other departments, the head of each to be elected by the regents, who should have power to appoint every official whose salary was not less than \$1,500.

Mr. Bardeen followed. He found himself in so much accord with the speakers who had preceded that he would dwell only on the points in which he differed from them, and upon one or two points in which he agreed with them which he wished to emphasize. He desired to say, as any of the speakers would have said if they had been asked, that the criticisms which had been offered should not be understood as implying that good work was not now done in both departments of education. In the one department the uniform examinations and the teachers classes, and in the other the regents examinations and the library system were undoubtedly models for imitation, and were being followed in other States so far as their means and opportunities allowed.

He agreed with Dr. Maxwell that the call for unification was for evolution, not for revolution. Changes made should be in the direction of growth, not of substitution. For this reason as well as others he entirely agreed with Dr. Maxwell that the control of both departments should be conferred not upon a new officer, but upon the chancellor of the university.

He had positive views also in regard to the constitution of the board of regents. There were many reasons why no change should be made. In the first place, change

is in itself undesirable. The board as now constituted has been in honorable and successful existence for more than a century. It has the prestige of age and an honorable history. If one legislature undertakes to make changes in it, an example is set for other legislatures. The time may come when an unworthy legislature may attempt to change it for unworthy ends. It should be remembered that the educational system of the State involves the expenditure of several millions of public money, and if it becomes a habit to make changes in the board of regents, the temptation may come to an unworthy legislature so to change the board as to put the control of these funds into the hands of a ring. But until the example of change has been set the legislature will be slow to undertake any such manipulation.

But apart from the objection to change, he doubted whether if the board of regents were to be constructed anew a better system could be devised. He had studied carefully the question of life-tenure. Statistics show that the average length of service of the members of the board of regents had been almost exactly fourteen years, just the limit proposed by those who are seeking a change. There are a good many advantages in life-tenure. In the first place it attracts a class of men who might be unwilling to assume these duties without this consideration. In the second place it puts the members beyond political control. We all know the effect of the present three-year tenure of office of the superintendent of public instruction. Mr. Bardeen was glad to say for the present superintendent and for his predecessor that they had in many cases withstood enormous political pressure; but as was well known to the members of the commission, they had not always withstood it. It was hardly possible that with the short term of office of the superintendent of public instruction all unworthy demands of members of the legislature should be resisted. Even with a term of office of fourteen years it is easy to see that as the period terminated, and the regent naturally wished to be honored by re-election, pressure might be brought to bear upon him of a kind that does not now exist.

Again the fact that the members are beyond political control discourages political manipulators from seeking to elect as regents the kind of men who are submissive to political control, and has thus placed upon the board men whose motives have always been above suspicion.

Sup't Cole of Albany, who had entered the room to visit his friend Mr. Wilkinson, was urged to speak. He said he entirely disagreed with all the previous speakers. He did not believe in unification. He thought both departments were doing good work, and would do better work separate as now. The work of the commission should be to define the boundary between them, and this he would do by putting under the

department of public instruction all schools supported by public taxation, and under the regents all those supported from private funds.

He would not, however, leave the election of the superintendent of public instruction in the hands of the legislature. In this matter the legislature did not represent the people. A body of 200 men elected without any reference to their knowledge of educational matters was not fitted to choose so responsible an officer. He would put the appointment of the superintendent absolutely in the hands of the governor, without necessity of confirmation. There has never been a governor who would not rise to such an occasion as that and appoint a thoroughly worthy man. The salary of the superintendent should be a great deal higher, at least as high as that of any college president in the country, and the term of office should be at least double what it is now. He agreed with what had been said as to increasing the power and salary and dignity of the officer of chancellor of the university, which should be made in every way the highest and most responsible educational position in the country.

In answer to a question Mr. Cole said that when an academy or a college became supported by public funds then it should be transferred to the department of public instruction, and in answer to another question said that he believed this would eventually be true of all institutions.

"Then under your plan the regents would eventually disappear by dry rot?" suggested Mr. Dewey, to which Mr. Cole assented.

John H. Peck of the Rensselaer Polytechnic institute was present and was also invited to speak. He thought there was a clear division between public and private education, but he favored increasing the power and dignity of the chancellor, as had been proposed, making it the most honorable office in the country. He spoke with much pride of the Polytechnic Institute, which he said had done more than any other institution of the State to confer honor upon the State in this country and abroad.

At the conclusion of these remarks the commission went into executive session, inviting however Judge Lincoln of the statutory commission to remain. It is understood that the commission will at this meeting block out a tentative plan for unification, and then adjourn for two weeks, those interested being invited in the meantime to submit criticisms of the proposed plan to the commission.

Unification Prize Papers

The prizes offered last summer by unnamed persons for the best essays by a woman and a man upon the subject of educational unification in this State, have been awarded to Miss Sara Elizabeth Stewart and

Richard Edwin Day, Litt.D. Mr. Day is somewhat generally known as a scholarly man of extended journalistic experience, having been for nearly twenty years an editorial writer and literary critic, chiefly upon the Syracuse Standard. He is a graduate of Syracuse University, from which he received in the present year his degree of Doctor of Literature.

In a memorandum accompanying their distribution to the public press of advance copies of the winning prize papers, which we print in this number of the Bulletin, the Committee say of Miss Stewart that her modesty has left them without further knowledge of her than that she has been a public school teacher in this State and is now teaching in Washington, D. C. We learn from another source that she is a graduate of Wellesley college, and certainly she confers honor upon her alma mater. Her admirable paper, which is the more comprehensive one, shows that she is thoroughly acquainted with the workings of the present school system of this State and is master of her subject.

She makes to stand out with great clearness the evils of our existing dual educational system, and all the logic of her reasoning, and indeed that of both prize papers, runs irresistibly to the conclusion that the highest welfare of our schools imperatively demands educational unification and that the same should be accomplished under the Regents of the University, whose traditional qualities lead both writers to regard them as an almost ideal organization for the desired purpose.

We understand that the prize papers are to be issued in pamphlet form and that copies may be obtained *gratis* from the Unification Prize Committee, at Palmyra, N. Y.

The papers should be widely read and carefully considered. They deepen our conviction that the State of New York is very fortunate in having in existence such a well-tested and in every way fittingly qualified organization as the Regents of the University, upon which to engraft the unification of its entire public school system.

Addresses of the Commission on Education

Hon. Frederick W. Holls, Yonkers, Chairman.

Hon. Joseph F. Daily, 32 Nassau st., New York, Secretary.

Hon. Daniel H. McMillan, Buffalo.

Hon. Robert F. Wilkinson, Poughkeepsie.

Hon. William E. Kernan, Utica.

D. F. Ainsworth, Deputy Sup't Public Instruction, Albany.

Melvil Dewey, Secretary Regents of the University, Albany.

